



Biloa Wenna adds the image of a chicken to the otherwise geometric motifs, Zecco, Burkina Faso. Margaret Courtney-Clarke, 1986



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LASTING FOUNDATIONS THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE IN AFRICA

Los Angeles, CA – The California African American Museum presents “Lasting Foundations: The Art of Architecture in Africa,” an exhibition surveying the innovative and varied architecture used in African homes, palaces, and public spaces. Whether mosques or churches meant to last for generations, or residential structures continuously evolving with the ebb and flow of daily life, Africa’s architects have created buildings that are practical and beautiful, adapted to the landscape, and imbued with symbolic significance. The exhibition is organized by the Museum of African Art, New York, with support from Merrill Lynch, and is on view at CAAM **May 17–August 19, 2007**. Accompanying programs include discussions, screenings and workshops exploring the exhibition’s themes.

From Timbuktu to Johannesburg, “Lasting Foundations” presents architectural elements in both urban and rural settings including magnificent carved posts, doors, locks, and window frames alongside photographs, video, and works by contemporary artists. From moveable hide houses found among nomads living in Africa’s deserts to fiber buildings woven like baskets, traditional architecture reflects many ingenious ways people have used local resources. Underground churches are carved out of rock in Ethiopia. Houses and granaries are made of seashells and coral along the coasts of Senegal and Kenya. And in Mali, Burkina Faso, and northern Ghana, people use a special mixture of clay, dung, and water to create buildings that look like sculptures in sand.

Featuring more than 60 works of art and 50 photographs, “Lasting Foundations” presents the art of African architecture surrounded by a photographic array of architectural styles from throughout the continent. In its thirteen sections spanning numerous peoples and geographic locations, the exhibition shows how ideas about family, home, and community are incorporated in many kinds of buildings, both permanent and ephemeral. The inclusion of works by four contemporary African artists—Susan Hefuna, Guy Tillim, Allan de Souza, and Stephen Hobbs—is also considered an “inspired bonus.” (*The New York Times*, Nov. 25, 2005) Their use of photography and sculpture presents a range of creative responses to domestic and urban architecture. Scheduled programming for the exhibition includes:

■ **Constructing African Architecture, Saturday, May 19, 1pm**

Steven Nelson, Assistant Professor, Department of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles, discusses African architecture with an emphasis on what the built environment reveals about cultural, social and

political issues in different African locales. Following the lecture, Professor Nelson will sign his newly published book, *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture In and Out of Africa*.

■ ***Yeelen*, 1987, 105 min., Saturday, May 26, 12pm**

Set in the powerful Mali Empire of the 13th century, *Yeelen* records the journey of a young warrior who must confront an evil sorcerer, who is also his father. Filmmaker Cisse uses historic tropes as reminders and symbols of “lasting foundations” that are still relevant and potent tools to address contemporary, socio-political problems.

■ **From the Ground Up, Saturday, June 9, 1pm**

Appearing as though they were sculptures in sand, buildings created by the peoples of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana are often a special mixture of clay, dung and water. Choose a specific architectural style and build a structure out of organic materials. Instructor: Wanda Clarke. Ages 9 and up.

■ **Film Screenings, Sunday, June 24, 1pm**

Three films reveal African constructs from antiquity to today as they expose tensions in cultures assailed by modernization and global tourism. Post-screening discussion with Tobias Wofford, special guest from UCLA’s Department of Art History and Michelle Craig, African art historian.

Heavenly Mud: Architecture and Magic in Mali, 2004, 52 min.

Taking us on a journey down the Niger River in Mali, this film records rarely seen traditional African architecture, edifices as visionary as those conceived by Gaudi in the 20th century.

Lagos/Koolhaas, 2002, 55 min.

Lagos’ population is expected to reach 24 million by 2020, which would make it the 3rd largest city in the world. Rem Koolhaas, winner of architecture’s Pritzker Architecture Prize, visits Lagos regularly to research the type of urban environment produced by explosive population growth.

Living with the Past, Historic Cairo, 2001, 56 min.

Living with the Past is a portrait of Darb al-Ahmar, a Cairo neighborhood in the heart of the old city, now facing a process of radical change. This film documents a unique approach to historic preservation, combining social and economic development with monument restoration.

■ **Exterior Expressions, Saturday July 14, 1pm**

Surface decoration also reflects Africa’s varied cultural landscape. The Ndebele and Zulu people employ a bright palette of abstract design to decorate their homes. Artist Fernando Vargas directs you as you adorn a South African adobe. Ages 9 and up.

The **California African American Museum** (CAAM) researches, collects, preserves and interprets for public enrichment the history, art and culture of African Americans. Chartered by the California State Legislature in 1977, CAAM is a state supported institution and a partner with the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum. In addition to its permanent collection, *The African American Journey West*, CAAM hosts specially mounted exhibitions curated through loans and its own collection, and tours CAAM exhibitions through California and the nation. Located at 600 State Drive in Exposition Park, the museum is open to the public Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sundays 11am-5pm. Admission is always free.

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